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Office of University
Communications

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Molly McKinney ('12) Continues to Seek Advice From GWU Professors

Molly Caitlin McKinney ('12) developed academic as well as practical skills as a student in the communication studies program at Gardner-Webb University.

“I was totally unaware that I learned so much under the wing of the Gardner-Webb communications department until I made it to my first job,” she observed. “The long nights in the Mac lab waiting for my project to render in Final Cut Express served as a real lesson on what not to do on the job post-graduation—procrastinate. The countless interviews for public relations classes with Dr. Lisa Luedeman coupled with lectures by Dr. Joseph Webb that seemed like something I should have been listening to in an auditorium at Harvard Law all created the experience, lessons and learning environment—that despite my thoughts at the time—ended up being most conducive to my current job.”

She taps into those lessons on a daily basis as the communications/marketing director for the LeGrand Center, an event venue in Shelby, N.C. Her job responsibilities include creating an awareness about what the center has to offer corporate customers, wedding parties or other groups. She handles in-house advertising needs and social media. She designs all the printed materials, advertisements and brochures and helps stage promotional videos. In addition to her day job, McKinney is also the owner of Miss Molly's Boutique, a ladies' and girls' clothing shop in uptown Shelby.

She looks back on the relationships she developed at GWU as critical to her ability to learn the concepts of communications studies and not only apply them in her career but also to winning the title of Miss Shelby and competing for Miss North Carolina, a Miss America preliminary pageant.

“Typically, most contestants are worried about the interview process, but Dr. Webb's media law class teaches you how to be quick on your feet,” McKinney explained. “And having him compliment my writing was probably the best feeling ever. Though he probably has no idea, he played a major role in helping me find my voice as a writer and ultimately led me to find the confidence within my own vocabulary to do freelance projects for a local magazine.”

She continued, “Dr. Luedeman also played a major role in my success. Whether it was unannounced meetings in her office while she sat across the desk with her Diet Dr. Pepper, or the creative group projects to test our limits, she always went above and beyond to make sure her students were prepared for life after the Webb.”

McKinney almost didn’t come to GWU, because it was too close to her home in Shelby, N.C. She changed her mind when former head cheerleading coach Andrew Day invited her to join the Runnin’ Bulldogs cheer squad. She soon discovered, however, that GWU was also the best choice for her academic and future success.

“When I describe to friends who went to larger universities that I literally had Dr. Luedeman for every class my last two years at Gardner-Webb, they laugh. But for me, I needed that,” McKinney shared. “I love relationships, and at Gardner-Webb, that’s what you get. I know for a lot, the idea of a smaller class size is less than appealing, but the way I see it, why wouldn’t you want the opportunity for that kind of one-on-one interaction when it comes to your career? I still seek Dr. Luedeman’s advice. You can’t get that anywhere else.”